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ABSTRACT

This 2-part report summarizes Dutch policy on mass media and reviews the status of cable television in the Netherlands. The first part defines the underlying principles of a national policy on mass media in relation to the press, commercial and educational television broadcasting, radio, cable television, and media research. Parliamentary debate on these issues and the impact of cable television from a technical and legal standpoint are also explored. The second part reports briefly on a study which was conducted to determine the level of individual participation in local cable television programming in six localities in the Netherlands. (RAO)

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MEDIA IN THE NETHERLANDS

by Mrs Franca Klaver

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Part 1:

A coherent media policy for the Netherlands

Part 2:

The organisation of active cable experiments

September 1976

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FOREWORD

This study is the first in a series relating to certain European experiments with new audio-visual techniques and the audio-visual situation in general in a few member states. It is one of the preparatory papers for a symposium on videography, radio and cable television which will probably take place in May 1977. Subsequent studies, available in the first three months of 1977, will deal with Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.

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PART 1

A COHERENT MEDIA POLICY IN THE NETHERLANDS

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A. Introduction

On 18 March 1975 Mr H W van Doorn, Netherlands Minister of Culture, submitted to the parliament a Memorandum on the policy to be followed with regard to the mass media (Nota over het massamedia-beleid). Both in parliament and the press there had already been much talk of an "integrated" media policy, which was regarded as an essential part of a cultural policy. Although the Minister acknowledged the existence of links between the different media, all of which offered information, culture, education and entertainment to the public, he repudiated the idea of integration. It was feared that if policy were defined in this way the government would have to treat all media exactly alike, whereas the differences between them were too great to be covered by a uniform policy. The Minister accordingly chose to qualify his policy as "coherent". This meant that the same principles would apply to the different media, but they might be put into practice differently depending on the nature of the medium. The substance of the policy was that all measures should be harmonised on the basis of common principles, the government bearing in mind at all times that measures relating to the press, for example, may have an effect on broadcasting and vice versa.

It would be misleading to assume that the memorandum covered all media. As will be seen below, this is not the case: it dealt mainly with press and broadcasting. It may be criticised on this account, and during the parliamentary debate there was, not surprisingly, a call for research aimed at producing a coherent policy for all media based on certain common principles.

This paper begins with a summary of the main points of the memorandum, followed by an account of reaction to the document. Emphasis will be laid on the problems of cable television, a new medium of communication, as the report is to appear in a series of studies dealing with that subject. Two further reports present the results of recent university research on experimentation with cable in the Netherlands. The second part of the paper summarises the report of a University of Amsterdam working party; a report by the University of Nigmegen will be discussed elsewhere in this series(1).

(1) CCC/DC (76) 73

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B. Summary of the "Nota over net massamedia-beleid"(1)

I. Introduction

The memorandum of 18 March 1975 is a first attempt to devise a medium-term policy for the mass media. It is the basis for parliamentary debate on government policy in the field. The media covered by the memorandum are the press (ie commercial newspapers, periodicals, opinion reviews and periodicals intended for the general public) and broadcasting (ie sound and televised, of programmes transmitted by cable or over air) managed by institutions which are non-commercial or non-profit-making. The memorandum refers to other media - eg films, records, books and audio-visual aids - only in passing, but this does not mean they are exempted from the government's present policy. However, priority is given to the press and broadcasting because of their importance and the serious problems they raise.

The objective of the mass media policy is to achieve freedom of opinion and expression and to encourage the fullest possible responsible participation in the use of the media.

II. Principles of the mass media policy

1. Democracy

Democracy is a form of government in which all of the people are entitled to influence government policy; among other things, it establishes freedom of opinion and expression, along with personal freedom and equality before the law. If government policy is based on the idea that all impediments to the optimum fulfilment of individual personality and society should be removed, that policy must provide certain conditions which may ensure this end, and one of them is an abundance and diversity of information.

2. Freedom of opinion and expression

The government proposes to take active measures to ensure that the members of society will have the right to express their opinions freely; this principle is the framework within which the media policy is defined.

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(1) Hereinafter called "memorandum".

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3. Pluralism

The results of research in this field are not sufficiently specific, so the following general principles will be observed:

- existing media will be presumed (unless there is proof to the contrary to answer the needs of both "transmitters" and "receivers" of communication and information, and are therefore to be maintained;

- care will be taken to prevent the formation of monopolies and, in general, situations capable of "blocking up" communication channels.

4. Participation

It is most important that all people should be able to be involved, in so far as possible, in the policy and responsibility entailed in the use of the media. At this point, however, the active participation of the general public in the use of mass media is not really feasible, although the situation of broadcasting is slightly more favourable than that of the press. The radio offers more possibilities for participation than the press because there are three forces at work in the press-management, journalists and readers. For the time being the only new prospects in view are in the relationship between management and journalists, in the form of an official status for the latter. Readers, on the other hand, have as yet no opportunity for participation.

5. Effectiveness

In the interests of effectiveness the government policy must encourage the media - in toto or individually - to offer a service which is pluralist and, of course, cultural, educational and recreational as well, in order to satisfy the needs of society.

6. Good and bad influence of the media

The prime function of the media is, of course, to provide information, but they should also be able to bring citizens to take an active part in various social activities. It has been observed, on the contrary, that the so-called "information explosion" tends rather to increase alienation and turn people away from social activities. The government must pursue an active policy to overcome these negative effects of the media in so far as possible.

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III. The press

With regard to the press, now seriously threatened by economic difficulties and heavy concentration of capital and personnel in a small number of firms, the Minister of Culture made a few proposals designed to preserve pluralism in newspaper and periodical information. For one thing, there must be no more mergers. To achieve this, the Minister proposed to subsidise the periodicals which are in greatest danger of a takeover and need financial support ("specific" measures). (Press circles, on the other hand - except for the journalists - are asking for general measures for the entire newspaper and periodical industry, such as reduced postal rates, special mailing rates etc.) One condition must be met before press organs can become eligible for aid: their journalists must be given official status enabling them to take part in decisions concerning the material to be published by their newspapers and periodicals.

In addition, amalgamation schemes need to be followed more closely, and research will be undertaken to this end. Lastly, "alternative" methods of production in and operation of press organs will be investigated.

IV. Broadcasting

1. As a whole

The memorandum does not apply to "Radio Nederland Wereldomroep", the Dutch transmitter which broadcasts only to foreign countries; it deals exclusively with broadcasts to the Netherlands, especially national and regional broadcasts and educational programmes. Transmission by central aerials is regarded as a form of regional broadcasting, and so there is no reason to treat "cable" as a separate medium.

Government responsibility in broadcasting is conditioned by two things: the shortage of frequencies and the cultural policy. Commercial broadcasting will continue to be prohibited. The use of cable has no effect, in principle, on the government's responsibilities in broadcasting. The rights of a holder of a licence authorising him to operate a central aerial for the transmission of cable programmes extend only to the management of the technical apparatus; there must be sound cultural justification for the licencing of new broadcasting organisations.

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Press and broadcasting can be given equal treatment as regards freedom of opinion and expression only if the Minister of Culture's disciplinary powers over radio are abolished. A bill is being prepared to amend the law to this effect.

2. National broadcasting

The basic principles of the Broadcasting (Omroepwet 1967) (a) accessibility and pluralism and (b) co-operation are to remain unchanged. At present, members of a broadcasting organisation and subscribers to periodicals containing lists of programmes are required to pay the radio tax in that capacity; this rule is to be abolished(1). However, membership of such an organisation, by which the size of its clientele is estimated, will be preserved.

The idea of elections as a means of measuring clientele has been rejected.

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(1) Under the present system, the following are members of a broadcasting organisation in the Netherlands:

1. anyone registered as such with the broadcasting organisation of his choice;

2. all subscribers to a periodical published by a broadcasting organisation and listing its programmes.

Those in either category must pay the radio-TV tax. According to the Minister's proposals, the first category will continue to pay the tax automatically, but the second only if they have asked to be registered as members, and membership of a broadcasting organisation is no longer conditional upon payment of the tax.

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The "complete programme" requirement embodied in the present Broadcasting Act (Art. 35) will be applied to the letter. The structure of the NOS(1) will be reconsidered. Should this prove necessary, amendment of the Broadcasting Act (Omroepwet 1967) to alter or possibly reallocate the activities of the NOS is not to be excluded. The two objectives of the NOS programme defined by the law are: to enable different currents of opinion on social and cultural questions to come together, and to broadcast programmes "ideally" suited(2) for transmission by the NOS (Article 36); the first of these should be deleted. It would be desirable to introduce a "speakers' corner" into the NOS broadcasting time(3). The "integration" of NOS programmes (with those of other broadcasting organisations) should continue, so that NOS programmes which do not satisfy the criteria of the Act (Art. 36) will not be transmitted in the name of the NOS. If this were achieved, the NOS broadcasting time could undoubtedly be reduced.

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(1) The "Nederlandse Omroep Stichting" (NOS) is a body which ensures co-operation among the different broadcasting organisations; it possesses broadcasting time of its own.

(2) This means general interest programmes, such as news broadcasts, sports, Eurovision programmes etc.

(3) This is a place where anyone may speak his mind in public on a subject which interests him. For the NOS, it would be a programme on which people could speak freely, to viewers, on subjects of concern to them; the NOS exercises some control.

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3. Educational broadcasts and the open school

The mass media can and should play a major part in offering educational possibilities to the general public. The two previous ministers of culture, Mrs M A M Klompé and Mr G Veringa, began discussion of an "Open School" project (a permanent education scheme) and preparations to implement it. The expenditure occasioned by the scheme will be shared by the ministries of culture and education. The proposals of the "Open School" committee are now being awaited.

Preparations to open a third TV network will begin once the corresponding needs and technical and financial resources have been defined.

4. Regional broadcasting

Regional broadcasts are all those not intended for the whole of the Netherlands public. At present there are two bodies, the RONO (Northern Provinces Broadcasting) and ROZ (Southern Provinces Broadcasting). In addition, 6 municipalities are engaged in experiments with active cable.

Regional broadcasting may prove important to the cultural life and social integration of a region. It can also promote participation. The regions served should not be too large. Moreover the need for regional broadcasting has not arisen everywhere. The authority responsible for these broadcasts may be the NOS or the "representative cultural institutions". A legislative decree based on Article 47 B of the Broadcasting Act (Omroepwet 1967) will be required to define these institutions, and this is now being drafted. The press cannot be representated on these cultural institutions. Bodies set up under Article 47 B will be required to co-operate with the NOS at the technical level. The cost of regional broadcasts will be borne by the regions; in the beginning, at least they will not be regarded as basic resources, and hence their cost will not be considered essential to social or cultural welfare. Further developments must await the completion of the 6 municipal experiments in active cable. Two-year experiments in over air regional broadcasting will also take place, in Amsterdam and part of North Brabant. RONO and ROZ may continue to form part of the NOS system, but RONO might be divided into smaller units.

5. Some special forms of radio and cable television

The Broadcasting Act (Omroepwet 1967) also applies to cable networks which cannot be considered a form of regional broadcasting. The following principles govern the operation of such networks:

1. They must be used solely for the transmission of specific programmes;

2. They must not be commercial and may not advertise;

3. They are operated only by non-profit-making organisations. Examples of the uses of such networks are broadcasts for the ill, "church telephones"(1), educational broadcasts and social integration projects.

Commercial producers of light music and video programmes will not be allowed to use the networks.

The idea of setting up a nation-wide central antenna system (CAS) will be given up. There is no objection to the transmission of foreign programmes over the cable network.

V. Research and consultation

Research in the mass media is becoming increasingly important to the definition of government policy in the field. The need for systematic research has led the Netherlands to set up a number of university and private institutions, whose research is co-ordinated by the "Interacademiaal Overlag Communicatiewetenschap".

Scientific research will become even more relevant to government policy once the master plan and research programme have been co-ordinated with the main points of policy, and it is therefore essential that research move in the proper direction.

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(1) Telephone lines transmitting church services to the bedridden, elderly etc.

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1. General approach

In view of the essential role of the media in society, research must expand its horizons rather than confining itself to message-reception. All aspects of mass communication should be covered, including the problems relating to message-offer, which have been somewhat neglected in the past. UNESCO has adopted some recommendations on research.

2. Specific short-term measures

First, a list will be drawn up of all the institutes engaging in research in the field; a research programme will then be prepared, attempting to deal systematically with all questions relevant to policy. Next, a list of priorities will be adopted.

Objections have been raised to the foundation of a national institute for mass communication research, on the grounds that it would be better to begin with a working party composed of a few members of the Broadcasting Council (Omroepraad) and Press Council (Persraad), university experts and government officials. This group would be the forerunner of a future Media Council (Mediaraad), which would advise the government on all problems relating to policy with regard to the daily press, periodicals, sound and televised broadcasts (by cable or air) and similar matters. Until then, the Broadcasting and Press Councils would continue independently, and the nomination procedure for members of the Persraad will be exactly the same as that employed for members of the Omroepraad.

C. The parliamentary debate

Parliamentary debate on the memorandum began on 27 January. All political parties were involved in it. Many questions were brought up concerning the present broadcasting system in the Netherlands (organisations of different social and political "shadings", co-operating within the NOS). Much attention was also given to the position of the press(1). Since the main

(1) The principles of "specific" subsidies was attached during the debate, but not ultimately rejected. Existing general measures will be maintained for the time being.

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object of this report is to summarise the present and future possibilities for cable, it will mention the main comments made on that subject during the debate. As explicity stated, some of the points made in respect of cable obviously apply to other media as well; mentioning all the important comments made about all the media would take us too far, however.

With regard to cable, the Liberal Party (VVD) held that it could be compared with printing as far as its potential for expression and opinion were concerned. The influence exerted upon it by the government and other authorities should consequently be as limited as possible. The use of cable by individuals, groups and organisations should be completely unrestricted. The VVD opposed any limitation of technical resources such as proposed by the Under-Secretary of State for Transport and Communications (see "technical aspects").

The Roman Catholic and Protestant Parties (KVP, CHU and ARP) supported the installation and operation of cable networks by private firms, who would not, thus, be wholly dependent on the post office. The ARP wanted an independent committee to make an objective and impartial study of the technical system to be chosen. All these parties were in favour of a standardised system because of the considerable practical advantages it would offer. They were opposed to commercial cable and thought that broadcasts should be produced by non-profit-making cultural and social organisations only. This means that the principles embodied in the Broadcasting Act (Omroepwet 1967) would also apply to cable.

The Communist Party (CPM) wanted the most extensive possible form of pluralism in both broadcasting and press, and said that opportunities for the expression of opinion should be virtually unlimited. The CPM representative wondered how the Helsinki resolutions on information distribution and East-West exchanges could be put into practice.

The Reformed Protestant Party (SGP) accused the Minister of Culture of trying to establish an artificial pluralism, and said there was only a semblance of pluralism whereas in reality, uniformity prevailed. (Several members of other political parties shared this view.) He pointed to the contradiction between the Minister's desire to encourage pluralism in the press and simultaneously limit the broadcasting time of the NOS whose object, according to the Broadcasting Act, was precisely to ensure pluralism of programmes. In this area the government had too much

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influence. Another reformed protestant party (GPV) spoke of the dangers of the cable technique in terms of the "evils arising from the media, such as alienation, the information explosion" etc.

The Socialist Party (PvdA) also drew attention to the uniformity of the programmes produced by some broadcasting organisations and said that the objectives of the Broadcasting Act, which included social and cultural pluralism, had not been achieved. It pointed out that the position of the NOS was a warranty of both the quality and pluralism of broadcasts and accordingly opposed the Minister's proposal to reduce NOS broadcasting time. It argued in favour of individual participation in the broadcasting process in all its forms; for that reason the current experiments with active cable should be continued. Broadcasts should not be commercial and there should be no advertising. On the technical side, the Socialist Party supported the project of the Under-Secretary of State for Transport and Communications to restrict the number of cable channels (programmes) and was also in favour of a standardised system. The activities of private firms now setting up and operating cable networks in several municipalities should be inhibited by stiffer concession terms. Cable belonged to the entire community and therefore the technical side should also be controlled by the community.

The Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP) agreed in general with the view of the Socialist Party, regarding restrictions on the technical possibilities of cable and standardisation.

In his reply, Mr H W van Doorn, the Minister of Culture, referred to the principles of accessibility and pluralism which he wanted to preserve as the basis of the broadcasting system. Every organisation applying for a licence to transmit programmes must be able to prove that its aims were cultural and that its operations were not commercial. This was valid for cable broadcasting as well. In addition, the organisations now belonging to the broadcasting system or desiring to join it must demonstrate that they intended to produce a "complete" programme, that is, one containing cultural, informative, educational and entertainment elements, and all in "reasonable" proportions. As the interpretation of these terms and their practical application had given rise to some difficulties in the past, the Minister proposed to issue a decree providing a more exact definition of the terms. At present cable broadcasts were not subject to the "complete" programme requirement, at least not in practice. (In fact, they did produce all types of programmes; see the report on "Local Cable Television as a Community Instrument".)

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On the subject of the present experiments, the Minister referred to the principle mentioned in his memorandum (page 67) to the effect that cable broadcasts should, after completion of the experimental period, be financed by their particular regions. It had been agreed between the Minister and the institutions carrying out the experiments that the latter would make proposals, towards the end of the experimental period, regarding the subsequent financing of broadcasts in the event that they wished to continue. Of course, this would depend to a large extent on public response to local broadcasts. The research being carried out alongside the experiments should show whether public interest really existed for the present, there was too little information available on the point. An interim report came out at the end of January 1976(1), but research would continue throughout the experimental period. Similar research would be carried out in respect of the local over air broadcasting experiments at Amsterdam and Eindhoven (soon to begin). Consultation was still in progress with regard to the new educational broadcasts called the "Open School" (cf Open University in the United Kingdom); the Minister promised to do his utmost to see that the plan would soon be put into action. These broadcasts would be nation-wide.

In reply to the question concerning the implementation of the Helsinki resolutions, the Minister said he would cover that point during the debate on his budget, which usually took place in the Autumn.

With regard to the position of the NOS, the Minister was preparing an amendment to the 1967 Broadcasting Act, which would release the NOS from the obligation to ensure "meetings" between the different trends of opinion of social and cultural matters. The amendment might entail a reduction in the NOS broadcasting time, but this was not certain. In any event, he was still convinced that pluralism was adequately guaranteed by the overall broadcasting system as it existed in the Netherlands. As stated in his memorandum, the NOS ought not to have any special mission in this field. This view, as mentioned above, was not shared by a good many members of parliament, who accused programmes of uniformity. In reply to them the Minister said that the present system, based on the

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1967 Act, allowed for the co-existence of two similar organisations provided each could muster the number of members required by law. This comment referred to the recent controversy over the granting of a broadcasting licence (zendvergunning) to the new organisation, VOO (formerly the pirate station "Veronica", now legalised) alongside the big "neutral" organisations such as AVRO and TROS, whose programmes followed the same general pattern. The issue was finally settled in favour of VOO. It would mean too much digression to go into the details of this interesting question, which challenges the justification for and practical applications of the present broadcasting system in the Netherlands.

D. Technical aspects

A second document appeared at the same time as the memorandum; this was a "Memorandum on the policy to be followed with regard to the installation and operation of cable networks". It related to technical and legal matters and was published by Mr M van Hulten, Under-Secretary of State for Transport and Communications, who is responsible for post and telecommunications services. The technical problems raised by cable are, as we all know, extremely complex; nevertheless, they must be briefly summarised before we can understand the cultural and social implications of the technique.

In his memorandum Mr van Hulten put forward the following ideas with regard to the future development of cable television: the installation of cable networks would be carried out partly by the CASEMA and partly by private enterprise, in compliance with the technical standards laid down by the post office. In other words, the licence required to set up a cable network would impose technical conditions with which the builder must comply. Networks would be operated partly by private enterprise and partly by a semi-public company called CASEMA, an offshoot of the post office and the 4 major traditional broadcasting organisations in the Netherlands (AVRO, VARA, NCRV, KEO).

Networks must be standardised to avoid the risk of a chaotic growth prejudicial to the future, and also to avoid waste of capital. The licencing conditions laid down by the post office will accordingly be as follows:

- every network must provide a minimum of 6 programmes and a maximum of 12. (The under-secretary of state considers that this will be sufficient until 1980-85).

- existing cable networks must be able to adapt to future needs, which means that they must be potentially able to receive more than 12 programmes (as many as 24 or 30), or convertible to pay-television without excessive modification or cost.

- The VHF/UHF process will be mandatory for all networks.

According to Mr van Hulten, these proposals have the following advantages:

(a) The investment needed to set up cable networks can be made gradually, not all at once;

(b) Ordinary sets can be used, which is a considerable advantage for the public.

(c) Existing networks (Cain, Gain(1)) can be linked easily and without undue expense.

(d) Two-way communication will take place primarily through the telephone network; an "integrated" technical network is not envisaged in the immediate future on account of the high cost involved.

The post office will impose one new condition regarding the programmes transmitted over cable networks. Network operators will be obliged to make the service available to any institution (association or other) authorised by the Minister of Culture to transmit cable programmes. This new condition is important for local programme originations, for difficulties have arisen in the past when an operator refused to transmit certain local broadcasts over cable. This can no longer happen.

Mr van Hulten's ideas have not been accepted unreservedly. In both parliament and press he has been accused of deliberately trying to restrict the number of programmes which could be transmitted by cable. A few speakers said that the possibilities were greater even now, or would be in the very near future. Why should the public be prevented from seeing

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(1) Cain are urban district, town or village networks (a few thousand sets); Gain are small networks (fewer than 100 sets connected, as in community aerials in single buildings).

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what it wanted and was prepared to pay for? Insisting that a single cable system be used which could carry no more than 12 programmes meant that it would quickly become obsolete and have to be replaced. Also, the government was thereby preventing private companies from installing any system other than the one recommended by the post office, and in particular the Delt Kabel (DKS) and Robert Schmitz (RS), which were both "star" systems. The VHF/UHF process required by the under-secretary of state favoured the (Dutch) firm of Philips to the exclusion of all other firms. Critics affirm that the requirements which must be met to obtain permission to set up a cable network, as proposed by Mr van Hulten, are such that in both installation and operation of networks the big winner would be the post office. A few MPs think the under-secretary has gone too far in his interpretation of the powers invested in him when, instead of simply demanding good quality reception as a criterion for setting up a network, he insists that one particular system be employed in every case. "Standardisation", which many people applaud, should not mean this. Parliament has consequently adopted a motion expressing its desire that in the matter of concessions the post office impose no additional conditions designed to curtail or limit new developments in the technical field; that its technical conditions differ as little as possible from those applied in the European countries bordering the Netherlands; and lastly, that there be no obligation to adopt the VHF/UHF process.

Parliament has adopted another interesting motion, in which it expresses the opinion that the prohibition of individual aerials applied in some Dutch municipalities possessing cable networks for the entire community is justifiable only where the individual is able to subscribe to a central aerial transmitting at least as many programmes as he could receive with an individual aerial. The justification for this motion was that the right to information is "an inviolable right of citizens in a state founded on the rule of law" (Rechtsstaat).

At the close of the debate, parliament adopted both memoranda. The proposed projects are now being carried out, and there will be further study and consultation regarding the subjects of controversy.

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PART 2

LOCAL CABLE TELEVISION AS A COMMUNITY INSTRUMENT (Summary)

Report by a working party of the University of Amsterdam Communications Institute

on the organisation of active cable experiments

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1. Introduction: Questions relating to the structures of the experiments

In March 1976 the report of a working party of the University of Amsterdam Communications Institute was published on the structures of the experiments with active cable(1) which began in 6 Dutch municipalities in 1974, authorised by the Minister of Culture and financed by the state. Although there are references to these experiments in accounts of the activities of various member states in other Council of Europe reports(2), it will not be irrelevant to summarize them briefly again here. They were to last two years, and the state subsidy granted to each was 450,000 florins for the entire period. No advertising was to be employed and certain facilities offered by the private industries were refused (reduced purchasing price, free co-operation etc). The maximum weekly broadcasting time was 3 1/2 hours. A body was to be set up in each municipality called a "representative cultural institution", composed of all organisations and trends of political or social opinion. This body was to be responsible for the administration of the local station, its programming and financial control.

2. The problem to be examined - questionnaire

In September 1975 the working party of the University of Amsterdam Communications Institute began a research project designed to find out from the directrs of the experiments in the 6 communities whether these institutions had been set up to permit the effective as distinct from theoretical participation of local inhabitants in social and political activities, including the broadcasts themselves. In other words, was it possible for any individual wishing to do so to have a share in the administration and programming of local

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(1) Another summary of the report, prepared by the Netherlands authorities, will be found in CCC/DC (76) 64.

(2) Cf "Cable: Political options and socio-cultural implications in France, Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands" by Mr R Ravar, CCC/DC (75) 27, pages 42-49.

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broadcasting(1), to contribute programme ideas and take part in decisions? If it was, and not otherwise, local cable could become a "community instrument", not just another new technique which enabled people to receive more broadcasts (passive cable), or a hobby for a few enthusiasts.

Other questions were asked, relating to the operation of local stations in this context.

For example:

- How was the administrative council of the local station set up?
- Could entities be members, or only individuals?
- How was power divided among the council and other parts of the local system?
- In other words, were decisions taken by a group which was truly representative of the entire population, or by a relatively limited body, such as a bureau, a committee of programme planners etc?
- What type of programme was most often chosen and how many hours of broadcasting have been devoted to each category?
- What philosophy governed the choice of programmes?
- What have been the financial results?
- Was the government subsidy sufficient?
- Economically, how was the future of local broadcasting envisaged?
- Would government funds be necessary to continue local broadcasting or were other resources available?
- Was there a desire to continue local broadcasting once the experiment was over?

Using a questionnaire covering all these problems, the working party consulted the experiment directors and obtained very detailed replies regarding the operation of the structures and history of the experiment in each municipality. It should be observed that the towns engaging in these experiments differ widely in population and composition. For instance, an expanding municipality like Zoetermeer (near The Hague), or a "new town" section of Amsterdam (Bijlmermeer) - each of which has 35,000 inhabitants - bears little resemblance to a small village of 6,000 such as Melick-Herkenbosch (in Limburg province) where everybody still knows everybody. There are also mixed towns such as Deventer, which have new districts growing up around an

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(1) In this paper "local broadcasting" refers to cable only and covers both sound and televised broadcasts.

old urban centre. In addition, the experiments did not all begin at the same time, for the initial organisational difficulties were so great in some instances that broadcasting could not start until some time after the date scheduled. The situations in the different municipalities were accordingly far from identical at the time of the investigation.

3. The experiment directors' replies

The report of the University of Amsterdam working party "Local cable television as a community instrument", gives extremely detailed replies to all these questions. It has been made available to the Council of Europe and extracts have been published elsewhere. For the purpcses of this report, however, one of the most important conclusions will be mentioned here.

At this stage, the people in the 6 experimental communities have been found to show interest in the programmes transmitted by their local stations, but they are still not sufficiently actively involved. For example, major decisions should theoretically be taken by a general assembly or administrative council of representatives of the entire community, but in practice this very seldom happens; either the assembly or council does not meet regularly, or it is preoccupied by internal conflicts, or it makes no clear statement as to the direction to be followed or the past or future programmes. In reality, most of the ideas come from people working at the local radio station - the small group who are actively interested - and are carried out by them as well. On the whole, this is the general picture to emerge from the experiments.

There are some notable exceptions, however. In two municipalities, Deventer (population 60,000) and Dronten (14,000) the public is regularly urged to join the local broadcasting association, suggest programme ideas and become involved in production. In other places, such as Zoetermeer (36,000), the structure is far more rigid: only organisations or institutions, no individuals, may belong to the local broadcasting council with the result that decisions are made by a relatively small group. Also, an "élite" is developing inside the studios, because broadcasts tend to be produced by the same groups of people, who thus acquire quite a solid training in technical methods and programming. In contrast to Zoetermeer, the people who make cable broadcasts in Deventer learn very little, and this is held to be a good thing by Deventer, which would regard a full-fledged training as an obstacle to communication for people wishing to

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make use of cable. For this reason the Deventer structure would appear to be the more democratic, flexible and attractive. In this town, as in Dronten, experience has also inculcated a realistic approach: local broadcasts are made only when a need for this particular form of communication has been clearly expressed, thus preventing it from becoming an end in itself.

A similar attitude prevails in discussion of the future of local broadcasting. All the towns involved in the experiment have learned that local programmes, particularly the "televised" part, are expensive. In most cases the government subsidy has been inadequate; the 450,000 florins went mainly to buy equipment, set up studios, and maintain equipment and premises. Most workers are voluntary and receive no payment for their time and effort. Even so, most of the local broadcasting institutions applied for (and received) supplementary funds from the Ministry of Culture. But this will now come to an end, for Mr H van Doorn, Minister of Culture, has made it very plain (on page 67 of his memorandum) that local broadcasting is a service by and for a particular region or town and its cost must be borne by them. The institutions which are now managing local stations and wish to carry on after the end of the period laid down by the Minister of Culture must find the means to do so from other sources, and in some cases at least this is clearly not going to be easy. As the institution authorities of Goirle, Deventer and Dronten have said, a choice will have to be made between a municipal grant to a school of music or local theatre, for example, and the local broadcasting station. Elsewhere, as in Zoetermeer, it may be possible for the local station to pay its way, provided that the number of cable subscribers increases substantially. This can only happen, of course, in good-sized towns such as Bijlmermeer or Zoetermeer, and in the latter case only if the local station can be transformed into a regional one, serving other localities in The Hague region.

4. What next?

For these reasons the future of local broadcasting is uncertain, on the whole, although every municipality which now has a local station wants to go on with it - or at least the people running the experiments do. But not, as we have seen, "at any price". Another report will discuss the desire of the general public

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to continue or abandon local broadcasting (1), and the final decision will depend upon that. For the time being, the University of Amsterdam working party has recommended that the experiment be extended for one more year, as the two-year period was not long enough to produce reliable results. The Minister of Culture has agreed to this proposal.

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(1) See the interim report of the University of Nijmegen, CCC/DC (76) 73.